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ABSTRACT

The 66 school censorship cases reported between 1976 and 1978 (it is estimated that only one censorship case in 25 is ever reported) do not really reveal clearcut regional patterns, but they reflect individual and selective group pressures against profanity, blasphemy, un-Christian thoughts, indecency (sexually explicit language and nude pictures), drug use, radical liberalism, bias, and the undermining of traditional values. This censorship, influenced mainly by a new wave of national conservatism and the "back to basics" education movement, is systematically promoted by such people as Norma and Mel Gabler of Longview, Texas, whose Educational Research Analysts organization supplies would-be censors with ready-made textbook reviews and worksheets for preparing censorship proposals. Opponents of such censorship, citing its stifling and dangerous impact on the educational system, are working just as hard to refute the censors' efforts. Through all the turmoil, some educators are seeking alternatives to the polarization of views that is so evident; and they maintain that parents should be included in the textbook selection/review process to eliminate bad feelings between parents and schools and to create a forum for a sensible, controlled response to the problem. (Two tables provide analytical data about the 66 censorship cases.) (RL)

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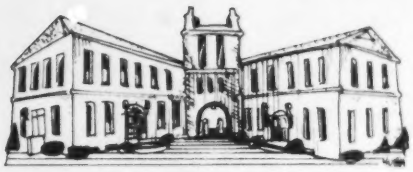

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AT COLUMBIA
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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER REPORT NO. 401

PARENTS PROTEST TEXTBOOKS

This report was written by Pham Thien Hung, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Around the 4th of July each year — as school children across the nation are celebrating Independence Day with fireworks and colorful parades down Main streets — school boards must begin the difficult task of selecting textbooks for the coming year.

And, ironically enough, while the children are celebrating the day commemorating the true spirit of the American Revolution — freedom from foreign domination (independence) and freedom from internal repression (freedom of expression) — some of these selfsame freedoms are being challenged in their academic world.

The controversy centers on the school board and its authority to choose texts for the children, as opposed to parents and militant groups who protest some of the board's choices. The controversy evolves into a whirlpool of arguments vis-a-vis "freedom" and "responsibility" that has merit on both sides.

School boards embroiled in these controversies are finding today that their task of maintaining academic freedom while protecting children is becoming increasingly complicated and challenging, involving liberal ideas and traditional, conservative values. And, besides organized pressures from citizen groups, the school board is having to deal more and more with vocal parents and, added to this group, students who demand their right to read "offensive" books — even as some board members seek to remove them (sometimes as a personal protest against the books' contents).

This report analyzes this trend during the period beginning with the bicentennial anniversary of America to the present. Table I presents the statistics.

For purposes of definition, an action will be considered bona fide censorship when a high school/elementary school textbook is actually, physically banned from classroom use (curriculum or reading list) and/or removed from the school library.

The term "textbook" will refer to any book used for educational purposes in the classroom or in the school library.

For the period under consideration — Jan. 1, 1976, to Nov. 1, 1978 — Table I lists 66 censorship incidents reported in the United States, involving about 205 textbooks and five magazines. However, Mary Woodworth, a University of Wisconsin-Madison library school professor, estimates (Milwaukee **Journal**, 1-16-78) that for every case of censorship reported in the media, 25 go unreported. Various reasons are advanced for this. For instance, a resolution or compromise on some point may be reached before the incident becomes worthy of publication — or weighty enough to attract the attention of the local news media.

And, as Bruce Shuman points out, librarians frequently perform a prior screening of all seemingly controversial materials before purchase and thus avoid any polemics that might arise — especially for libraries in small towns and rural areas.[1]

Even so, the cases reported in this paper indicate that censorship is very much alive all over the United States. In this analysis, Table I shows censorship state by state; the location of the censorship incident; the officials ordering the removal of the textbooks; titles and authors of censored books; and the disposition of the case — withdrawing the textbook from classroom use (or reading list) or from the library shelves and, in some cases, taking it entirely out of the school system. Table I also lists the **stated** reasons behind the removal or banning of the book and identifies the person or group who suggested the action.

A decision to banish a textbook can be challenged by either a librarian or a teacher — supported in many instances by his or her union or association. Protest against removal of a book may also come from students or their parents. In a few cases, the school board's decision was contested in court — such as in Chelsea, Mass. But court verdicts usually take months, even years.

A brief perusal of Table I indicates that most decisions to remove books are made by school boards.

The censorship incidents shown in Table I were first reported in a local or metropolitan paper, after which almost all were re-reported in the **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom**, published by the American Library Association.

Overview

Analysis of the cases by state indicates that of the 32 states presented, Maryland leads the list with seven cases of textbook removal. The city of Rockville, Md., alone accounts for three incidents. In Howard County, Md., a Media Review Committee recommended removing 29 textbooks on drugs and sex education from the school system, one of the biggest withdrawals in the history of textbook censorship.

Illinois and New Jersey follow Maryland in the number of

Summary: Parents, teachers, students, minority groups and civil liberties organizations, in addition to school boards, have recently been expressing great concern over the educational materials used in the nation's schoolrooms. Textbook censorship activity for the period Jan. 1, 1976, to Nov. 1, 1978, is the focus of this report.

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incidents of textbook censorship, each with four cases. California, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan and Pennsylvania follow with three cases each.

New York and North Carolina are next with two cases each. Of these, New York was involved not only with the removal of the largest number of books (69 in Levittown, L.I.), but also with the removal of prestigious, award-winning authors.

In Tar Heel, N.C., Hemingway's **A Farewell to Arms**, **For Whom the Bell Tolls** and **To Have and To Have Not** were banned.

In Levittown, the school board censored **Laughing Boy** by Oliver La Farge and **The Fixer** by Bernard Malamud.

Brighton, Mich., is second to none in its attempt to prevent sex education from invading its school system. It eliminated **all** books dealing with this subject — particularly the eight titles given in Table I.

Such an innocent-looking and apparently neutral book as the **American Heritage Dictionary** brought down the wrath of three school districts — in Anchorage, Alaska; Cedar, Ind.; and Eldon, Mo. — for its sexual definitions.

But leading the list of book "culprits" is **Go Ask Alice**. This book was written as the diary of an anonymous young woman who took drugs and eventually died from an overdose. It is banned in five locations: Warsaw, Ind.; Trenton, N.J.; Levittown and Lyons, N.Y.; and Eagle Pass, Texas.

Other textbooks that appear on more than one prohibition list include:

Flowers for Algernon — Plant City, Fla.; Emporium, Pa.
A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich — Levittown, N.Y.; Chatham, Ga.
Our Bodies, Ourselves — Ludlow, Mass.; Morgantown, W. Va.
Slaughterhouse-Five — Goshen, Ind.; Levittown, N.Y.
In the Night Kitchen — Springfield, Mo.; Northridge, Ill.
Naomi in the Middle — Brockport, N.J.; Rockville, Md.

Authors

Interestingly enough, the authors of the three most banned books are either anonymous — **Go Ask Alice** — or collective — **Our Bodies, Ourselves** and the **American Heritage Dictionary**.

Authors who were singled out in particular for criticism included (Des Moines **Register**, 1-20-76) J. D. Salinger, **Catcher in the Rye**; John Steinbeck, **The Grapes of Wrath**; Ken Kesey, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, **One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich**; Kurt Vonnegut, **Slaughterhouse-Five**; and Piri Thomas, **Down These Mean Streets.**

Geographical Interpretation

Shuman in his study "A Geography of Censorship" finds 10 states having a high incidence of censorship cases (seven or more cases in the period of two years).[2] Breaking these down by regions, he finds in the **Eastern Region**, Maryland, New York and New Jersey; in the **Northcentral Region**, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin; in the **Southern Region**, Texas; and in the **Western Region**, California.

Strangely enough, while stereotypically the Southern states are considered the most conservative and intolerant, they account for only 20 percent of the censorship incidents, despite having 31 percent of the U.S. population.

Shuman generalizes from his findings that high-incidence states are likely to be populous, Eastern, urbanized and industrial. He also suggests that school libraries in large cities statistically have the greatest chance of being censored. On this point, one may speculate that the makeup of the people in these metropolitan areas has something to do with this extensive censorship. These residents, though geographically close, represent a variety of different cultures, political ideologies, religious inclinations and ways of life — hence they have different value systems.

The similarity between Shuman's findings and those in Table I seems to indicate that there is a correlation between those states and a high degree of textbook censorship. Or to say this another way: According to Shuman's findings, regional characteristics seem to be associated with book censorship.

The Dissection of Pressure

Regional pressure arising from society's mores, though pervasive, is not easy to pin down. By contrast, individual and group pressures exerted on school boards and teachers are more apparent. A quick look at Table II discloses that unlike previous periods when pressure on textbook selection and use came from organized citizen groups, during the past two-and-a-half years, pressure has come predominantly from parents, resulting in 39 out of a total of 66 cases of textbook removal — or 59 percent.

Another unlikely, yet important, source of pressure originates with school board members and school officials themselves. This emerging group accounts for 13 cases of censorship, or 20 percent.

Organized citizen groups and unknown/unspecified pressure sources are responsible for six and eight cases of banning, respectively. Among the organized citizen groups — Citizens Advocating Responsible Education, the Maryland Chapter of the National Organization for Women and the Florida Action Committee for Education — each successfully urged the removal of two books.

A religious denomination and an Indian tribe each compelled the removal of one textbook.

Parental protests, on the other hand, during this period were still unorganized (except for one parent organization in New York — Parents of New York-United), although on the whole they were very vocal. For the most part, however, parental efforts seemed to be isolated, scattered and unstructured.

This trend is in diametric contrast to earlier decades, as reported by Fred Thompson and Max Marshall in Freedom of Information Center reports 194, 195 and 199.[3] Previously, the effort to remove and censor textbooks was carried out actively by organized citizen groups and/or pressure groups such as the Citizens for Decent Literature and the National Organization for Decent Literature. However, in the period under study for this report, these organizations seemed to be dormant. None of the censorship cases shown in Table I was brought about by any of these once very active national groups.

Successful cases of censorship by such organizations as NOW, FACE and CARE were predominantly local achievements, not nationally coordinated efforts as in the previous period. Nor was the Indian protest of a Vermont history book a continuous effort to suppress textbooks in general, but only

an isolated incident. The Indian protest was (Kansas City **Times**, 5-27-76) similar to the actions of the parents of black pupils who attempted, out of pride and sensitivity, to censor Mark Twain's **Huckleberry Finn** in New Trier East High School, Illinois.

A new and growing concern of anti-censorship groups (the "right-to-read" activists) today is the direct involvement of school board members or school officials in protesting textbooks themselves. Their actions are responsible for about one-fifth of all the cases. As protesters, not only do they exert pressure on themselves, but as decision-makers they expurgate books from reading lists or library shelves. Their rationale is (Kansas City **Times**, 7-18-78) to "improve the education" offered by the school, according to one board member, William Chapel of Warsaw, Ind. Many feel, however, that a protesting board member who serves as both plaintiff and judge can neither do justice to a textbook nor serve education better, as claimed. Instead, many fear the school board member may destroy the present system of education, as charged by Edward Jenkinson, an Indiana University English professor and chairman of the Censorship Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. According to this committee, the subversive acts of power-usurping board members present an unprecedented threat to freedom of choice of textbooks — and an ever-present headache for the right-to-read advocates.

Systematized Censorship

The professed reasons for which a textbook is censored are as varied as the censors' backgrounds. According to Ernest Lefever, personal taste and values, as well as religious beliefs and political philosophy, are (St. Louis **Globe-Democrat**, 5-22-78) often more controlling than any set of objective criteria.[4]

Two important influences are presently at work: (1) a pervasive mood of conservatism throughout the country, and (2) a demand for a return to the basics in teaching language, literature and mathematics.

The main themes of the censorship criteria are neither new nor original, even though most of them have been "systematized," thanks — or no thanks — to Norma and Mel Gabler of Longview, Texas, who help protesting parents to be more effective in their endeavors.[5] James Hefley also proceeds in the same direction with supportive literature.[6]

The protesters' arguments, however, are not usually as articulate or persuasive as the right-to-read proponents whose arguments center, for the most part, on the First Amendment of the Constitution (freedom of expression)[7] or John Milton's hypostasis of the free marketplace of ideas.[8]

The numerous reasons for textbook censorship, as presented in Table I, are generally defensive, repetitious, unpredictable and vague. The recurrent themes can be classified as follows:

1) Profanity, blasphemy and un-Christian thoughts.
2) Indecency mostly related to sexual language, nude pictures, explicit sex descriptions and discussion of human sexuality.
3) Drug use (encouragement).
4) Radical liberalism.
5) Bias: sexist or racist ideas in language, racial stereotypes and derogatory descriptions of races.
6) Undermining the family, society, human relationships and traditional values through sex education, descriptions of extramarital affairs and expressions of un-American ideas.
7) No educational value, objectionable content, "trash" and "rotten literature."
8) Secular humanism and value revisionism.

These criteria seem to touch on all the principal facets of social life and morality. Parents of today do not seem to be willing to relinquish all responsibility for their children and allow the school — teachers, librarians and school boards — to be the only molders of their children's minds.

'Instant' Censorship

The Gablers in Texas go a step further by declaring that textbooks can cause irreparable damage to children.[9] They are convinced that crime, violence, venereal disease and abortion rates will continue to increase until textbooks are changed. They even go so far as to assert that since textbooks shape the nation, they can be an influential factor in determining how citizens vote, and by extension, what the nation will become and where it will go. Because of this view, the Gablers call for protestations against hundreds of textbooks and, if necessary, expurgation.

At the same time, they understand that censorship is time-consuming and hard work and that most parents do not have the time to read textbooks and complete complaint forms as insisted on by school administrators, teachers and librarians, and without which they will not make a decision.

The Texans, therefore, have devised a system of organizing thousands of textbook reviews, which they distribute through their Educational Research Analysts organization. These reviews assist the would-be censors (they call themselves book analysts) in overcoming the drudgery of censoring the contents of the books. For a small contribution, the would-be censor can receive reviews from the Gablers' nonprofit organization in Longview. These reviews point out questionable content and help parents to complete the complaint forms rather easily and painlessly.

The Gablers' reviews also help the would-be censors sound rather professional. According to Edward Jenkinson, one parent in a small Iowa town, using a Gabler review, gave a two-hour speech criticizing a textbook and sounded like an expert.[10]

The Gablers do not do all the reviews themselves but appeal to concerned parents all over the country to produce them, following a prepared outline that lists categories of objectionable content. Jenkinson cites a number of typical objections that appear in the reviews:

a) Passage is judged objectionable if it directs an attack on the Bible or Christianity, America, morality or traditional values.
b) Negative thinking exists — such as prejudice, skepticism, violence, "isms" such as communism or humanism, invasion of privacy, etc.[11]

It seems likely that anything can be classified as objectionable — by either one reviewer or another.

Jenkinson cites the instance of a Gabler review that points out objectionable entries in Webster's **New World Dictionary of the American Language**. Most of the objections involved slang terms, but nine words (bed, fag, horny, hot, knock, queer, rubber, shack and slut) that appeared to be sex-oriented apparently were the deciding factor in rejecting this dictionary. While it seems irrational to discredit a 1,692-page

Table 1: Analysis of Textbook Censorship in the United States

State	County/ School District	Official Who Ordered Removal	Book Title	Author
Alaska	Anchorage	School Board	**American Heritage Dictionary**	Houghton-Mifflin Co.
Arizona	Laveen	Superintendent	copies of **Time, Newsweek** and **Glamour** magazines	
Arkansas	Hot Springs	School Staffer	**Run, Shelley, Run!**	Gertrude Samuels
California	Oakland	Superintendent	**Daddy Was A Numbers Runner**	Louise Meriwether
	Chula Vista	Panel appointed by School Board	**Whistle in the Graveyard: Folktales to Chill Your Bones**	Maria Leach
	Oak Grove	Superintendent	**Popular Songs**	unknown
Florida	Plant City	Principal	**Flowers for Algernon**	Daniel Keys
			Manchild in the Promised Land	Claude Brown
	Jacksonville	unreported	**Glowchild, a Collection of Poetry**	Ruby Dee
Georgia	Chatham, Savannah	School Board President	**A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich**	Alice Childress
Idaho	St. Anthony	South Fremont High School Principal	**One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**	Ken Kesey
Illinois	New Trier, Winnetka	unreported	**Huckleberry Finn**	Mark Twain
	Spring Valley	School Board	**Freddy's Book**	John Newfeld
	Northridge	School Board Member	**In the Night Kitchen**	Maurice Sendak
			Book of Dogs	Sonia Lampson
	Niles	Superintendent	**Father Christmas**	Raymond Briggs
Indiana	Cedar	School Board	**American Heritage Dictionary**	Houghton-Mifflin Co.
	Goshen	School Board	**The Catcher in the Rye**	J. D. Salinger
			Brave New World	Aldous Huxley
			Slaughterhouse-Five	Kurt Vonnegut
	Warsaw	School Board	**Go Ask Alice**	anonymous
			The Bell Jar	Sylvia Plath
			The Stepford Wives	Ira Levine
			Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students	Sidney Simon et al.
Iowa	West Des Moines	Associate Director of Instruction	**The Seventeen Gerbils of Class 4A**	William H. Hooks
	Monticello	School Board	**Jack the Bear**	Dan McCall
	Davenport	unreported	**The Making of a Nurse . . . I'm Done Crying**	unknown
			I'm Glad I'm a Boy, I'm Glad I'm a Girl	Whitney Davron
Kansas	Gardner	School Board	**Jaws**	Peter Benchley
Maine	Aroostock	School Board	**Rabbit Run**	John Updike
	Lisbon	School Board	**The Last Butterfly**	Michael Jacot
			Praise the Human Season	Don Robertson
			A Collection of Plays About Women	Megan Terry, ed.
Maryland	Montgomery	unreported	**Everyone Has Important Jobs to Do**	Shirley Chilton et al.
			First Steps in Horsemanship	Linton M. Real
	Howard	Media Review Committee	29 books on drug education and family life including:	not recommended
			The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test	Tom Wolfe
			Drug Abuse and What We Can Do About It	James Bennett
	Montgomery	Board of Education	**The Dog Next Door and Other Stories**	Theodore Clymer et al.
	Rockeville	Superintendent	**Growth With Our Language Today**	David E. Conlir
			Time of Wonder	Robert McCloskey
			Naomi in the Middle	Norma Klein
			Forever	Judy Blume
	Rockeville	Director of Instructional Materials	**Sports** magazine	
	Frederick	Superintendent	**Grendel**	John C. Gardner
	Howard	Media Criteria Review Committee	**Kookaroo and the Kangaroo**	Mary and Elizabeth Durack
Massachusetts	Chelsea	School Board	**Male and Female Under 18** (a poem entitled "The City to A Young Girl")	Nancy Larrick and Eve Merriam
	Ludlow	School Committee	**Our Bodies, Ourselves**	The Boston Women's Health Book Collective
Michigan	Brighton	School Board	all sex education books, including:	
			Conception and Contraception	Jean C. Lipke
			Sex	Jones, Shainberg and Byer
			Population, Evolution and Birth Control: A Collage of Controversial Ideas	Garrett Hardin, ed.
			Sex Is For Real	Willard Dalrymple
			Vasectomy	John Fried
			Foolproof Birth Control	Laurence Lader
			The Sexual Revolution	McCuen and Bender
			Man and Woman	Time-Life

(From Jan. 1, 1976 to Nov. 1, 1978)

Prohibited/Removed From	Reasons	Favoring Censorship	Opposing Censorship
classroom use	"offensive" definitions	parents' complaint	
school library	Carrying nude pictures or articles on sex	unknown	
school library	Objectionable language	parents' complaint	
banned in junior high and limited loan in high school library	"profane" language and explicit sex scenes	parents' complaint	librarians/educators
limited circulation	passage about "devil worship"	parents' and clergy's complaints	coordinator of school library series and librarians
both classroom and library	drug encouragement	parents' protest	
11th-grade English class school library	unreported	FACE (Florida Action Committee for Education)	
library of a 6th-grade center	"too profane"	unreported	
school library	vulgar language	parents' protest	Georgia Library Assn.
classroom	profanity	unknown	author/teacher
English reading class	offensive language (use of the word "nigger")	parents of black pupils	ACLU
school library	book's theme	parents' complaint	
school library	sexually explicit	school board member's complaint	
school library	spreading ill feelings	superintendent	
both classroom and library	"obscene" definitions	parents' complaint	
curriculum	profanity	school board members	English teacher
curriculum and library	"filth," "poor taste"	parent's protest, supported by "People Who Care" (a parent group)	other parents
school library	objectionable language	parents' complaint	
student library	objectionable language	parents' complaint	
junior high library elementary school library	sexist	parents' complaint	
school library	explicit sex description	parents' complaint	librarian
restricted loan	description of sex and extramarital affair	parents' protest	
classroom use	profanity and depiction of sexual acts	religious group (Baptist) protest	English teacher and the Maine Teachers Assn.
school system	sexist	NOW Chapter	
	unfair description of horses	horse-loving teacher	
	drug education and undermining family life	CARE (Citizens Advocating Responsible Education)	
school system	sexist	NOW Chapter	School Board member
classroom use school library	sexist, too explicit or insipid	unreported	
elem. and junior high schools	sex in sport	elem. school librarian	
restricted loan to 11th- and 12th-grades	obscenity and vulgarity	parents' complaint	
elem. school library	racial stereotype	local resident	
banned from school system	vulgar and offensive	parents' complaint	school librarian and supporters
classroom use	explicit discussion of human sexuality	parents' complaint	
library use	containing information on birth control	School Board member	another School Board member

Table 1

State	County/ School District	Official Who Ordered Removal	Book Title	Author
	Hesperia	School Officials	**We Can't Breathe**	Ronald Fair
	Wyoming	Principal of Rogers High School	**Saturday Night Fever**	H. B. Gilmour
Minnesota	Bloomington	Superintendent	**Welcome to the Monkey House**	Kurt Vonnegut
	Eden Valley	School Board	**Runaway's Diary**	Marilyn Harris
Missouri	Eldon	Board of Education	**American Heritage Dictionary**	Houghton-Mifflin Co.
	Springfield	Director and Staff of Elementary Education	**In the Night Kitchen**	Maurice Sendak
New Hampshire	Milton	School Board Chairman	**One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich**	Alexander Solzhenitsyn
New Jersey	Montclair, Westfield and Mahwah	School Board	**Man, A Course of Study**	Educational Development Center, Mass.
	Trenton	School Board	**Go Ask Alice**	anonymous
	Brockport	School Board	**Naomi in the Middle**	Norma Klein
	Newport	unreported	**At the Head of the Tide**	unknown
New York	Lyons	Principal	**Mr. and Mrs. Bojo Jones**	Ann Head
			My Darling, My Hamburger	Paul Zindel
			Go Ask Alice	anonymous
	Levittown, L.I.	Island Trees School Board	60 books removed in March 1976 and 9 books banned in June 1976, including:	
			The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers	Langston Hughes, ed.
			A Hero Ain't Nothin' But A Sandwich	Alice Childress
			Soul on Ice	Eldridge Cleaver
			The Fixer	Bernard Malamud
			Slaughterhouse-Five	Kurt Vonnegut
			The Naked Ape	William Desmond
			Black Boy	Richard Wright
			Why I Am Not a Christian	Bertrand Russell
			A Reader for Writers	Jerome Archer, ed.
			Go Ask Alice	anonymous
			Laughing Boy	Oliver La Farge
			Down These Mean Streets	Peri Thomas
North Carolina	Tar Heel	Bladen County Board of Education	At least 20 books; among them:	
			A Farewell to Arms	Ernest Hemingway
			For Whom the Bell Tolls	Ernest Hemingway
			To Have and to Have Not	Ernest Hemingway
			Airport	Arthur Haley
			The Will Boys and several volumes of poetry by black authors	William S. Burroughs
	Cabarrus	Board of Education	**Jonis**	David Dalton
Oregon	Springfield	School Board	**Life** magazine	Time-Life
	Gervais	Committee Appointed by School Board	**Angry Hills**	Leon Uris
			The Bird's Nest	Shirley Jackson
			The Dictionary of American Slang	Harold Wentworth
			The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing	Marilyn Durham
			The Betrayers	Phylis Schlafly and Chester Ward
Pennsylvania	Pittsburgh	School Board	**The Bastard**	John Jakes
	Emporium	Cameron County School Board	**Flowers for Algernon**	Daniel Keyes
	St. Mary	School Board	**Sexual Deviance and Sexual Deviants**	Eriche Goode and Richard Troiden
	Oil City	Allegheny-Clarion Valley School Board	**Of Mice and Men**	John Steinbeck
Rhode Island	Providence	Director	**The Relearning**	James Humphrey
Tennessee	Coffee County	School Board	**Drums Along the Mohawk**	Walter D. Edmonds
Texas	Eagle Pass	School Board	**Go Ask Alice**	anonymous
Vermont	Swanton	School Officials	**Vermont, Our Own State**	unknown
	Chester	School Board	**Saturday, the 12th of October**	Norma Fox
Virginia	Chesterfield	School Committee	**Deenie**	Judy Blume
			Then Again, Maybe I Won't	Judy BLume
Washington	Kent	unknown	**Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack**	M. E. Kerr
	King City	Northshore School Board	**Catch-22**	Joseph Heller
West Virginia	Morgantown	Principal	**Our Bodies, Ourselves**	The Boston Women's Health Book Collective
Wisconsin	Madison	Malcolm Shabez and City School Officials	**National Lampoon**	
	Milwaukee	unreported	**Working**	Studs Terkel
Wyoming	Jackson	Teton County School Board	**Growing Up Female**	Abigail Heyman

continued)

Prohibited/Removed From	Reasons	Favoring Censorship	Opposing Censorship
school library	sexual language	parents' complaint	
school library	blasphemy	parents' complaint and local group's protest	
classroom use	sexually explicit language	parents' complaint	
school system	objectionable language	parents' complaint	
school system	objectionable definitions nudity	a highway patrol trooper Director and Staff of Elem. Education	local resident
school library and freshman English class	objectionable language	parents' complaint	
school system	prejudice against Eskimos	Board of Education president	
school system	"salacious, dirty"	School Board candidates	
restricted loan	offensive and poorly written	superintendent	
classroom use (temporarily)	offensive, "un-Christian" and profane	parents' protest	
6th-grade reading list	"obscene"	parents' complaint	
school libraries	materials offensive to Christians, Jews, blacks and Americans in general; "filthy," "educationally unsound"	PONY-U (Parents of New York-United)	students, backed by N.Y. Civil Liberties Union, local teachers' union and publishers
classroom use			reviewed in July 1976[2]
			reviewed in July 1976[3]
school library	profanity, sexual preference	School Board candidate and local editor	
school library	filthy language	parents' protest, supported by local pastor	
classroom use	picture of nude woman	unreported	
temporarily removed for examination	no reason given	unreported	Oregon Library Assn.
school system	objectionable language	parents' complaint	
junior English class	references to sex	parents' and religious leaders' complaints	principal
destroyed	unreported	unreported	school librarian
school system	profanity	parents' complaint	
classroom use	vulgar, sexual content	parents' complaint	
classroom use	obscenity and profanity	School Board member and minister	
school library	"rotten" (objectionable content)	parents' complaint	librarian and local weekly
two pages removed	discriminatory description of Indians	Abenaki Tribal Council's protest	
7th-grade classroom use	"filthy" language	parents' complaint	State's Attorney
restricted loan	sexually explicit passages	parents' complaint	
elem. school library	vulgarity and defamation	parents' complaint	
required reading list	"objectionable" language and depiction of sexual acts	unreported	teachers[4]
school library	"objectionable" content ("anti-Bible, anti-male" and "anti-system")	parents' complaint	
cancellation of subscription	"pornographic" content; no important intellectual value and questionable moral standards	local education director	
classroom use	corrupts the morals of the young	parents' protest	
school library	sexually explicit photographs	parents' complaint	

FOOTNOTES:
1. As a result of objections to censorship, the book was returned to the library but usage was restricted.
2. The book was placed on restricted loan.
3. The book was returned to circulation.
4. The book was placed on suggested reading list.

Table 2: Source of Censorship Pressure

State	Parent or Parent Group	Organized Citizen or Social Group	School Board Member or School Official	Other Source (Unreported, Unknown or Unspecified)	Total Number of Cases	Total Number of Textbooks Involved
Alaska	1				1	1
Arizona			1 (Superintendent)		1	3 magazines
Arkansas	1				1	1
California	3 (including one case involving parents and clergy)				3	3
Florida	1	1 (FACE)			2	3
Georgia	1				1	1
Idaho				1 (anonymous)	1	1
Illinois	2		1 (Superintendent) 1 (School Board Member)		4	5
Indiana	2		1 (School Board Member)		3	8
Iowa	3				3	4
Kansas	1				1	1
Maine	1	1 (Religious Group)			2	4
Maryland	1	2 (NOW Chapters) 1 (CARE)	1 (School Librarian)	1 (local resident) 1 (unknown)	7	38 and 1 magazine
Massachusetts	2				2	2
Michigan	2		1 (School Board Member)		3	10
Minnesota	2				2	4
Missouri	1 (Elem. Education Director)			1 (highway patrol officer)	2	2
New Hampshire	1				1	1
New Jersey	1		1 (School Board Member) 1 (Board of Education President) 1 (Superintendent)		4	4
New York	2 (including PONY-U)				2	69
North Carolina	1		1 (School Board Member Candidate)		2	21
Oregon				2 (unreported)	2	5 and 1 magazine
Pennsylvania	3			1 (unreported)	4	4
Rhode Island	1				1	1
Tennessee			1 (School Board Member and Minister)		1	1
Texas	1				1	1
Vermont	1	1 (Indian Tribe)			2	2
Virginia	1				1	2
Washington	1			1 (unreported)	2	2
West Virginia	1				1	1
Wisconsin	1		1 (Local Education Director)		2	2
Wyoming	1				1	1
TOTAL	**39**	**6**	**13**	**8**	**66**	**205 books and 5 magazines**

dictionary based on nine words out of 157,000 entries, nonetheless, a hostile review, coupled with a few letters of objection, knocked this world-famous dictionary off the state of Texas' purchase list.[12]

Jenkinson notes that the Gablers' reviews have made an impact on schools throughout the country and the use of their materials and reviews is on the rise. More and more school teachers and administrators are finding that much of what the textbook protesters are saying invariably comes from that little town in Texas where the Gablers reside. Jenkinson also contends that the Gablers' apparently successful campaign against textbooks has led them to expand their efforts to other school materials as well.

Jenkinson warns that the Gablers and their dedicated followers have put public education "on trial,"[13] or worse, and could destroy the present system of education through the "game of instant censorship."[14] He feels their efforts should not be taken lightly nor discounted as a passing phase in the battle of textbook censorship.

Appraising Censors

Other opponents to textbook censorship join Jenkinson in perceiving the danger of this trend, and they are earnestly and methodically working to refute censors' efforts and the protesters' drive to ban texts — at times with strong emotions.

In a speech before the National Science Teachers Association, Gerard Piel, publisher of **Scientific American**, warned of the militant activities of textbook censors.[15] These "vigilantes," Piel charged, have carried their vociferous protests into the classroom — into proceedings before school boards and state education authorities — into the courts — and into the streets. Last spring, the censors managed to carry their "agitation" to the floor of Congress and, Piel warned, these "troubled" people may have succeeded in bringing to a halt the science "curriculum reform" movement.

Piel pointed out that unsuccessful amendments, introduced by Reps. John B. Conlan of Arizona and Robert E. Bauman of Maryland, would have given Congress a veto power over the content of curriculum and research projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation. As it was, implementation funds for National Science Foundation projects for that fiscal year were canceled. Piel angrily pointed out that the "evil" aspect of these cuts was that they were the result of **a few congressmen** who wanted to censor **only one course of study**. Piel also cautioned that the textbook vigilantes' activities could unintentionally invite the federal government's meddling in public education — the very thing they most wish to avoid.[16]

At the National Council of Teachers of English annual meeting last year in New York, Jenkinson warned that contemporary censors of school material are going after these materials "with a vengeance." According to Jenkinson, they come from all walks of life. His Committee to Study Censorship has come across 40 national or state vigilante groups that exist primarily to censor textbooks and other school materials, focusing on about a dozen targets, including: books on drugs, ghettos and conflict with parents (or containing negative statements about parents); character dialogue not spoken in standard English; and works by "questionable" authors such as Langston Hughes, Ogden Nash, Joan Baez, Malcolm X and homosexuals. "Trash" textbooks are listed as **Catcher in the Rye**, **Soul on Ice** and **Black Boy**. Other taboos include (**Christian Science Monitor**, 12-19-77): secular humanism (or courses involving value clarification) and self-understanding (social and ethnic heritages or cultural aspects of family life).

Who Are the Censors?

While the term "censor" is a technical one, to the lay public it frequently carries a negative connotation, and anyone who happens to protest a book or disagree with the appropriateness of its contents is labeled "censor." This is the other side of the coin in the quest for a middle ground in choosing textbooks. As the education director of the Heritage Foundation in Washington has pointed out (Des Moines **Register**, 1-20-76):

> The word censorship is a red flag being waved by those who would prefer to exclude parents completely from the selection of their children's books. The issue is not censorship, but whether parents have the right to some input into the selection of books that their children read and that they are paying for with their tax money.

Protesting parents have often been pictured by book proponents as reactionary, repressive, troublemaking, fundamentalist, or stupid and uneducated individuals.[17] Critics have failed to distinguish two kinds of textbook protesters:

1) **The organized citizen group** -- such as Parents of New York-United, the Daughters of the American Revolution or other permanent citizen organizations that have long-range planning and a fixed goal of protesting or censoring textbooks that do not fit their standards.

2) **The individual parent or one-shot protester** — such as an individual who considers a book offensive and protests its use to a teacher, school official or school board member. Tables I and II reveal that most parent protesters belong in this category.

To label a one-shot textbook protester a "censor," "book burner" or "violator of the First Amendment" may not serve any useful purpose for the right-to-read supporters — other than name-calling. Many of the protesters think of themselves as little people having no ambition to undermine or change the public school system. They simply want to protect their children from being exposed to ideas or influences contrary to their religious beliefs or traditional values, morals or way of life. They demand that schools take due precautions in selecting textbooks and be more responsible in using them in teaching.

Reasons for the Censorship Rise

According to Jenkinson, social unrest is (**Christian Science Monitor**, 12-19-77) to blame for much of the rise in censorship during recent years. The school has become the scapegoat of concerned parents and vigilante groups who lash out in their frustration against change that they do not understand. According to Jenkinson, the public school system is the most visible and most accessible level of government and frequently becomes their target.

Other authorities explain textbook protestation in terms of a general tendency in America to return to conservatism — a reaction to the liberal or radical 1960s with its war protests, drug culture and sexual liberation.

On the other hand, Barbara Luebke says that book protest is an attempt by parents to demand accountability from the public education system.[18]

Book condemnation has also been interpreted by others as a way to release the anger and tension accumulated from the

difficulties of daily life, from a sense of powerlessness against big government and big business, and from feelings of alienation in today's society because of changes one doesn't understand and can't control.

A Viable Compromise

Whatever the reasons behind the individual textbook censorship syndrome, educators and school officials in some places are trying to temper their relationships with these protesters with understanding and compromise instead of brushing aside all their complaints as bigotry or repression.

In Wisconsin, the state superintendent of schools has conceded (Milwaukee **Journal**, 1-16-78) that a parent has a right to judge whether a textbook or other material is acceptable to his or her child. On the other hand, she has said that "no parent or group of citizens has the legal right to abridge the rights of other parents, teachers or children to have access to the information which is part of the educational program."

This is a step further, and a more liberal position, than that of Ken Donelson, an English professor at Arizona State University who has proposed a more defensive position for English teachers.[19]

A report prepared by the Bureau of Instructional Media Programs of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Cooperative Children's Book Center advises local school districts that parents have "the right to request" that a textbook selection be reviewed. The report also recommends that a "reconsideration procedure" be set up to deal with any problems that arise. According to library science professor Mary Woodworth, "reconsideration" means (Milwaukee **Journal**, 1-16-78) establishing a process whereby any individual may challenge and ask for a reconsideration of the removal of any book from the library shelves or curriculum. Woodworth holds this process is necessary because, "One of the problems is that librarians forget that they're not God — that they can make a mistake in a selection." One might add that this also applies to school boards and other school officials in their dealings with protesting parents.

The National Education Association suggests that parents should be consulted and involved as advisers in the book selection process.

This idea is shared (Des Moines **Register**, 1-20-76) by Assemblywoman Rosemary Gunning of Queens, N.Y., a vocal yet pragmatic defender of rights of parents:

> I think if you take a fair representation of parents you'll always find enough common sense to make an appropriate selection of books. It is total conceit to assume that the judgment of "professional educators" is superior. I'm sure that many of us who have friends in the academic world would agree that they are not always the smartest or the most sensible of people.

Right-to-Read Successes

In spite of high-sounding complaints of protesters and the alarming tones of educators and school officials, the right-to-read supporters have scored quite a few successes against the would-be censors in this period under consideration.[20]

In addition, the courts have frequently ruled in favor of the right-to-read proponents. The U.S. District Court in Boston, Mass., held recently that a school board could either buy or not buy a book, but that once the book was on display, it was illegal for the board to remove it, as this act could be construed to be an effort at mind control and would violate the First Amendment.[21]

Pro-book organizations such as the special committee on access established by the New York Librarians Association and, in Chelsea, Mass., the Right to Read Defense Committee have been an effective brake to censors' advances.[22]

Future Trends

On the other hand, ethnic groups (blacks, Indians, etc.), other minorities and social groups (for example, NOW) will continue exerting pressure on textbook publishers and others in an effort to change their public image in a favorable direction, as well as to remedy past grievances and inequalities. It is estimated that texts reflecting racial bias and social injustice will account for most of the removals in this category in the future.

Strong pressure will still continue to come from various vigilante citizen groups, the self-righteous, the tyrannical right or left, the true believers (such as the Gablers and their followers), and the "professional" protesters (especially those who have too much free time and don't know what to do with it).

But individual cases of textbook protests, so regnant in this period, will abate in the long run, it is felt. Not only will library materials become too varied and complicated for the single parent to evaluate and protest effectively, but also the right-to-read people are becoming better organized in refuting their claims — as borne out in the Chelsea case.[23] (A combination of effort/pressure from the NEA, the ALA and their liberal supporters is an awesome force to be reckoned with.) Better organization by these groups will bring about more contributions and, for that matter, better legal advice when the censorship case goes to court. The courts, on the other hand, will hand down more and more rulings that standardize the handling of disputed textbooks — mostly in favor of the pro-textbook forces, it is felt.

Above all, there seems to be a new attitude of accommodation or even coordination among educators, school officials, even publishers, and protesters. Guidelines and procedures are being set up to handle protesting incidents more effectively, and less painfully, on both sides. Step by step, book proponents have come to grips with a delicate situation and have ceased to eschew textbook protest cases as a dangerous antecedent, endangering their occupation and their children's intellectual life. Publishers, in particular, are also making modifications in the content of textbooks to live up to the new trend. Houghton-Mifflin, for instance, has issued (Washington **Post**, 11-26-76) anti-stereotype guidelines to achieve 20 percent minority representation and a 50/50 male-female balance in all of its educational publications.

Finally, if literature is — as it is said to be — a reflection of society, and if the general milieu of society now is as conservative as some say, then one would expect the textbooks of the future to be less controversial.

Given also the assumption that people's general educational level is steadily increasing, it is expected that in the future it will be easier for the public to absorb and cope with controversial topics and to be more receptive to others' views.

In the past, the textbook melee took place primarily among parents, teachers, school officials, librarians and their respective supporters — all in the name of children. However, the children of today have grown up with the TV tube, and researchers claim that these TV children are more knowledgeable and open to wider horizons than their predecessors. One might therefore expect that they will be more open to ideas

and that children exposed daily to a dose of sex, alcohol and violent acts on the TV screen will not find items in textbooks formerly considered shocking all that consequential.

In the future, perhaps, while there may be more protests and hence more parental influence on textbooks and other school materials, it is anticipated that there will be actually less removal or destruction of them. It is hoped that the celebrated "Kanawha County Textbook Burning Episode" will become known as the vertex of the protest movement and that there will be no future re-enactment.

Even so, it is predicted that public education will not find rosy days ahead in the ambience of stricter conservatism (as shown by the 1978 election results), more federal government involvement (though subtle), frequent teachers' strikes and tax revolts — but that is another story.

FOOTNOTES

1. Bruce A. Shuman, "A Geography of Censorship: A Regional Analysis of Recent Cases," **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 26 (January 1977):3.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 4.
3. Fred Thompson, **Right-Wing Censorship of Books**, Freedom of Information Center Report 194 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri School of Journalism, January 1968); Fred Thompson, **Textbooks and Racial Pressure Groups**, Freedom of Information Center Report 195 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri School of Journalism, February 1968); and Max L. Marshall, **The 'Right-to-Read' Controversy**, Freedom of Information Center Report 199 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri School of Journalism, April 1968).
4. As an example of textbook assessment, Ernest W. Lefever, director of Georgetown's Ethics and Public Policy Center, selected a rather typical textbook, **American Government in Action** by Mirian R. Resnik and Lillian H. Nerenberg, and asked highly qualified critics independently to evaluate it. The critics were: Michael Novak, professor of religious studies at Syracuse University; Jeane Kirkpatrick, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute; and Ann Crutcher, a veteran journalist and editorial writer for the Washington **Star**. They evaluated differently, but all criticized the book. Novak chided the book for promoting the cause of big government. Kirkpatrick charged that it failed to communicate traditional Western values; Crutcher objected to the authors' brushing aside personal responsibility for social wrongdoings.
5. Edward B. Jenkinson, "How to Condemn a Book Without Reading It," **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 27 (May 1978):49 and 69-72.
6. James C. Hefley, **Textbooks on Trial** (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, a division of SP Publications, Inc., 1976).
7. Charles H. Busha, ed., **An Intellectual Freedom Primer** (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1977).
8. John Milton writes in **Areopagitica**:
"Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licencing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter." **The Oxford Dictionary of Quotation**, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 352.
9. Jenkinson, p. 49.
10. **Ibid.**
11. **Ibid.**, p. 71.
12. Perhaps this is one of the stickiest points in the whole controversy. Teachers and school officials strongly criticize parents' tyrannical condemnation of an entire book just because of a very small part or a few words. But it is not unusual that it is sometimes the very controversial part which makes the book important.
13. Jenkinson, p. 72.
14. **Ibid.**, p. 49.
15. Gerard Piel, "'Congress Shall Make No Law. . . ,'" **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 25 (September 1976):108 and 130-33.
16. On the contrary, Eugene H. Methvin accuses the National Education Association leadership of forming an alliance with the federal government and transferring control of public education from locals to Washington, D.C. This, Methvin charges, signals the end of traditional grassroots control of education by school boards, teachers, parents, pupils and taxpayers. Eugene H. Methvin, "The NEA: A Washington Lobby Run Rampant," **Reader's Digest**, November 1978, p. 101.
17. Barbara F. Luebke, **Textbook Censorship: New Aspects**, Freedom of Information Center Report 349 (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri School of Journalism, February 1976), pp. 1 and 4; also, Piel, p. 131.
18. Leubke, p. 5.
19. Ken Donelson, "What to Do Before the Censor Arrives," **Journal of the Producers Guild of America** 17 (June 1975):15-18 and 26.
20. See **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 25 (January 1976), 25 (March 1976), 25 (September 1976), 25 (November 1976), 26 (January 1977), 26 (March 1977), and 26 (May 1977).
21. "The First Amendment: Massachusetts Judge Orders Banned Book to Be Returned to High School Library," **Publishers Weekly** 214 (31 July 1978):21. See also "Federal Court Reverses School Library Censorship," **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 27 (September 1978):113 and 125-28.
22. "Federal Court," p. 113. Also, "NYLA Acts on Rights of Minors," **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** 27 (January 1978):1.
23. Partially as a challenge and rebuff to the Chelsea, Mass., School Committee's censorship of the anthology **Male and Female Under 18** (because of the theme and language of one of its poems, "The City to a Young Girl"), the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table bestowed on Chelsea High School librarian Sonja Coleman the 1978 John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award. The local Right to Read Defense Committee was also given cash grants from the Freedom to Read Foundation. "Federal Court," p. 113.